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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes the failure of a small rural community college's plan to deliver non-traditional educational services to non-traditional students by reorganizing its administrative structure; it also discusses the successful programs that finally emerged from this failure. The plan involved elevating the dean of community services to a position equal to that of the dean of instruction and devoting 20 percent of the college's total resources, including faculty workload and support services, to community services. Because the plan was vague as to the authority of each dean, a power struggle between the deans evolved. Also, because faculty members did not participate in the development of the plan, they resented their non-traditional assignments. Faculty members, as well as department chairmen, support services personnel, and even the president, retained their traditional working relationship with the dean of instruction and largely ignored the new dean. In less than one year, the plan was discarded and the dean of community services resigned. However, the dean of instruction adopted the values and programs previously advocated by the dean of community services, and, when the traditional administrative structure was reestablished, the number of community services programs increased and gained the support of the institution as a whole. (DC)

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CREATIVE FAILURE IN INNOVATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE FOR DELIVERY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

by

Martha Turnage

Planners of this 30th annual meeting of the American Association for Higher Education should be commended for recognizing the creative aspect of failure. This is done as a matter of course in professions other than education. If doctors had always accepted "the patient died" as an explanation sufficient unto itself, think of the medical knowledge that would have been lost! Major break-throughs in the entire health field have been made as the result of clinical analysis of the cause of death; not in order to place blame, but to learn from the experience.

In the past, neither administrators of higher education in general, nor community colleges in particular, have advocated the clinical analysis of failure. According to Arthur Cohen, community colleges use the technique of articulating a new mission as a way of denying the failure of an old one.[1] Much could be learned in all of higher education from a systematic analysis of failures in instructional methodology, curriculum development, guidance and counseling, and organizational structure.

The creative aspect of the failure reported here deals with a small rural community college's efforts to re-organize its traditional administrative structure to deliver the educational services compatable with the needs of non-traditional students. This experiment, despite

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the failure of the plan for administrative reorganization, provided the impact necessary to redirect the emphasis of the college from the regular college student to the non-traditional student.

Part of the assignment of this session is to emphasize whatever lessons can be learned from the experience. This has been undertaken in the latter part of the paper. Colleges involved in altering their administrative structure to serve non-traditional students more effectively will recognize many of the same problems and possible pitfalls. The following excerpts are taken from a position paper outlining the plan for delivery of community services, written by the college president and dean of community services. I will read the sections from the paper which deal with the rationale for the community services thrust, and the plan developed to implement it.

Historically, community colleges developed in the United States for the purpose of serving the people within a particular locality. The key that synthesizes the diversity of any community college is the recognition given the word "community" in its name. This word signifies that the college must bring together people and their vested interests and stimulate them to identify common concerns . . . If community services are to play a major role in today's educational world, with its limited resources and greater emphasis on accountability in the use of these resources, they must be revitalized. Community services must serve as the major link between the many groups which the college serves and the instructional program. A first step in the revitalizing process is to define community services in such a manner as to place them in the mainstream of the college's activities.

Community services in a community college may be defined as the continuous process of identifying, responding to, altering and being altered by the needs and resources of the community which the college serves. This definition can be implemented through the following procedures:

I. Understanding the community and its people.

II. Understanding the mission of the college and working with its limitations as well as its resources.

III. Recognizing the resources of the community and utilizing these resources.

IV. Viewing the community as a laboratory and relating the regular instructional courses to the community.

V. Developing specific courses and activities to meet community needs.

Community services as a function of the community college should follow a positive plan of action, rather than reacting to every suggestion. This can be achieved by clearly articulated objectives supporting the basic mission and purpose of the college. These objectives must reflect the characteristics and needs of the many groups who comprise the community . . .

Philosophically, if community services are to lose their second-class citizenship status, the person in charge of this function must be elevated to a position on a par with the person in charge of instruction. This has been done at this college. The college has a dean of community services who reports directly to the college president. The status of this position is equal to that of the dean of instruction in the college's decision-making process. Consequently, the dean of community services participates in decisions affecting the college's total instructional program. However, philosophies and organizational charts are hollow commitments indeed if the function has no resources upon which to call.

Earlier it was suggested that resources are needed if the community services function is to be revitalized in the community college. At this college, a total college commitment to the community services function has been made. The administration, faculty, and board have agreed that 20% of the total college's resources, including support personnel and services, will be devoted to community services.

Digressing for just a moment to address the 20/80% allocation of faculty workload, this was an arbitrary figure with no relationship to the intent of the community service function. To design a program in response to needs, the community services percentage might just as well have been 30/70, 90/10, or 50/50. The 20/80% was purely a political compromise on use of faculty time.

A full-time instructor's teaching load is fifteen credit hours. Therefore, the 20% commitment to community services means that the dean of instruction assigns twelve credit hours and the dean of community services assigns the equivalent of three credit hours. Faculty members report directly to the dean of community services for this 20% of their time. Service functions of the college, such as the business office, the admissions office, the learning resources division and other similar service areas must alter their schedules and procedures to respond to the community.

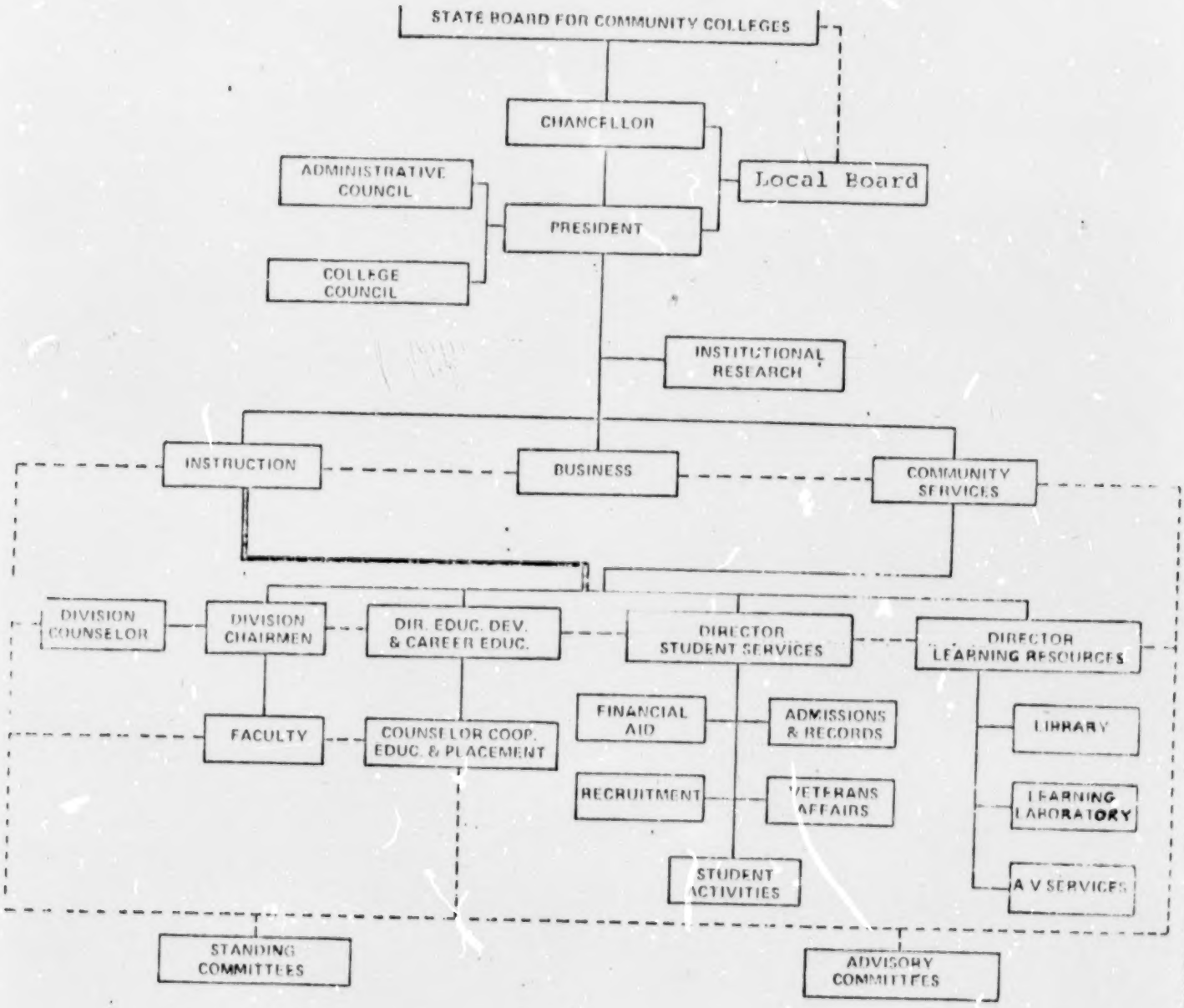
The community services function takes on new meaning for each teaching faculty member since it constitutes one-fifth of the normal workload. The dean of community services no longer has to go with "hat in hand" to the dean of instruction to see if anyone might be available for a community service course. Division chairmen implement plans for both deans. More importantly, the dean of community services does not recruit a number of part-time faculty members and begin to develop a "second college" through the community services program. If an overflow of students occurs in a

discipline, it is the responsibility of the dean of instruction to find a lecturer to teach the overflow. He cannot increase the regular faculty member's teaching load beyond the 80% that is committed to the regular instructional program.

As a result of this approach, community services occupy an important place in each professional staff member's schedule, personnel, and professional commitment, and in the fiscal and physical resources allocated to the entire college. The integration of instruction and community services becomes the natural way of doing things.[2]

In summary, the foregoing gave the philosophic basis for reorganizing the traditional administrative structure of the college into a dual deanship . . . a dean of instruction and a dean of community services, with dual authority status. From the beginning, the plan was set on a collision course. (It was too disruptive to the traditional role of the dean of instruction in higher education to survive without strong reinforcement.) The dean of community services was responsive to external pressures to deliver educational services at times and in places that responded to the needs of the non-traditional student; the dean of instruction was responsive to internal pressures to maintain the traditional approach to instruction and support services.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART[3]



Lines of Communication

This organization chart, taken from the college's faculty and staff handbook, shows the dual deanship administrative structure. The philosophic base of this plan was well articulated prior to its implementation. '(The college employed a consultant who was an authority on adult education to assist in creating an environment of acceptance for the community services thrust during a mid-management seminar session. However, the operational implications of the dual deanship shown in this organization chart were never clarified in the proposal, and perhaps for good reason. William D. Guth points our in The Management of Change that proposals that get adopted tend to be very difficult to implement efficiently since, "In order to gain commitment for the proposal, fuzziness in the proposal is often required so that people will be able to read into it what they have to in order to be able to support it."[4] In this instance, fuzziness had to do with of authority, procedure in decision-making process, concomitant changes indicated in other parts of the organization structure to accommodate to the new deanship position.

Benne and Birnbaum speak to the question of the strategy necessary for successfully effecting institutional change. They emphasize the underlying principle that, to change the roles and relationships in one part of an organization requires accompanying changes in other parts of the organization. If these changes are not made, one can predict lowered morale, requests for transfers, and even resignations. Attempts to change any position in the administrative structure must be preceded or accompanied by diagnosis of other positions that will be affected by the change.[5]

The plan was devised without developing the strategy for implementing it, only for introducing it.

So long as the revitalization of the community services function remained in the philosophical stage, pointing to the educational needs of the service area of 88,000 persons, with a rapidly shrinking high school enrollment and a low adult literacy level, there was no quarrel with community services. When the concept reached the implementation level, the ambiguity of the plan referred to earlier began to surface. When the inevitable tension, brought about by the confrontation of driving and restraining forces developed, the lack of clarity in the conceptualization of the plan became evident. The more direct the action from the dean of community services, the more the traditional chain of command from the dean of instruction to the mid-management level to the instructional faculty was strengthened, both downward and upward. (You know, traditional educators involved in higher education are still traditional even when placed in a community college setting.)

In the first place, the faculty, on whom its success ultimately depended, did not participate in development of the plan. When it was thrust upon them, there was a predictable reaction. Cohen points out that community college faculty were trained to teach, not to cope with the non-traditional student or be involved in community development.[6] Therefore, they experienced a high level of anxiety when confronted with the assignment of teaching the equivalent of three credit hours in unfamiliar settings, working with non-traditional students. As a result, many developed their own defense mechanisms against the community services thrust, though some of the more adventurous faculty members welcomed the new emphasis. (An interesting side effect developed in which

the "threatened" faculty sought refuge from the phantom storm on the safe shores of the chain-of-command of the division chairmen to the dean of instruction.) Greater authority developed at the mid-management level of the organizational structure as a result of the paternalistic role they assumed with the "entrapped" faculty members.

Despite the organization chart's dual authority structure, division chairmen retained their traditional working relationship with the dean of instruction. In fact, all mid-management personnel in the instructional division, and support services of student services, admissions, learning resources continued to be controlled by the dean of instruction and reported directly to him. The dean of community services was dean in name only. The dean of instruction attended deans' meetings alone, and in fact established the understanding with the president that in the event he was unable to attend, one of the division chairmen would substitute for him. The philosophies supporting community services were real enough, but the organization chart proved to be a hollow commitment.

Violation of one of the basic principles of management, unity of command, doomed the dual deanship to failure. The "total college staff" concept could not surface under these restraining conditions, and admonitions from the president to "be a team" were overridden by the built-in power struggle between the deans. Cooperation cannot be mandated unless attended by authority commensurate with responsibility.

If you recall, during the Second World War, serious rivalry developed between Eisenhower and Montgomery so long as they were supposed to exercise equal authority. The internal battles between their staffs made the enemy

almost irrelevant. And in this instance, control of the world by a common enemy was at stake! Just so, the administrative rivalry that ensued between the two deans had the effect of dividing the faculty rather than uniting. Community services became symbolic of the intruder, and the regular instructional program became the defender. Mid-management and faculty formed an interesting network of cliques, each with its own "hidden agendas." The oldest organizational ploy known to man, that of "scapegoating," became the manifestation of the conflict. According to reports to the president from division chairmen and other pivotal staff positions, the dean of community services represented a "threat" to the faculty, who felt "entrapped" by the 20% commitment.

In studying conflict in public schools, Ronale Corwin determined that school size has a direct influence on conflict. The smaller schools foster a form of organizational parochialism. Concentrated hierarchial decision-making aids in the creation of a social climate conducive to conflictual situations.[7] In this case, decision-making was highly concentrated. The community services plan had not evolved from participatory planning, but was announced as an administrative decision prior to the signing of contracts for the new year. This laid solid groundwork for future sabotage.

Certainly the size of the college is also a determining variable in this conflict analysis. The college had less than 35 full-time faculty members, and was located in a relatively isolated small town.

Guth maintains that <u>when</u> there are numerous individual self-interests that are inconsistent with the over-all interest of the organization, the behavior of the participants is predictable. To illustrate this predictable behavior, suppose you were a faculty member teaching in a regular program at the college, and were asked to travel over poor roads at night to a distant location to teach non-traditional students in a mobile classroom. You could not object to community services as opposed to your

own best personal interest. As a result, you would have to invent arguments which would mask personal interests with concern for the organizational interest -- these masking arguments frequently revolve around the personality syndrome.[8] Even under very adverse and inconvenient circumstances, however, there were some faculty members who were both intriqued and frightened by the prospect of teaching non-traditional students in an isolated community in mobile classrooms.

During the entire process, the dean of community services was more sensitive to community needs than to internal political nuances. Manipulation of self-interests of the traditional administrative and faculty roles was indicated by the political climate, but not utilized by the dean of community services.

The model of organizational politics for the management of change aids in delineation of the behavior of the three top college administrators:

-- the dean of community services' authority was meaningless. In reality, he had no institutional personnel to lead. His deanship was in name only.

-- the dean of instruction may have seen the dual deanship as an invasion of his tradition line of authority with his faculty and staff

-- the president, with his own analysis of the resource base of the institution and the environmental opportunities to which the base might most productively be applied, was traditional in his support of the role of the dean of instruction.

In retrospect, it appears that the impact made by the community services thrust in a relatively short period of time created some of the problems that ensued. If the influence of the dean of community services

had expanded, it would have been at the expense of the traditional academic structure and to the "academic mind," that was totally unacceptable.

In less than one year, the method of implementation of the plan as related to the dual deanship was discarded as dysfunctional. The dean of community services resigned. The dean of instruction became the only dean of the college. The innovative administrative structure had failed. The failure, however, gave "breech" birth to a strong community services program at the college. The dean of instruction assimilated the values and programs previously advocated by the dean of community services. These programs were assigned to the director of continuing education, who reported directly to him. (This is the traditional community college organizational structure.) Had the dual deanship administrative structure really worked, it is interesting to speculate how this would have affected the role of the president in a college of this size.

After the departure of the dean of community services, the momentum gained under the initial community services thrust continued to build. In the height of the conflict a program, "Family College Nights," designed especially for the non-traditional student by the dean of community services in cooperation with division chairmen as a means of maximizing the use of the mobile classroom buses during the crunch of the energy crisis, was successfully launched. Community response was so strong that the program was continued and increased from two to three nights a week. Since its inception, twice as many students attend "Family College Nights" as attend regular daytime classes. In the fall of 1974, 373 full-time and 672 part-time students attended the college. "Family College Nights" brought entire families into the college from the service area on the

mobile classroom buses. The program is the 1970's version of the church as the hub of family life in rural communities. Student clubs have nursery for the babies, the library a story hour for toddlers, teen-agers can attend classes, movies, seminars. Credit and non-credit classes are taught for the entire family. As the program entered its second year of operation this spring, it was expanded to meet demands of the 2,000 who have attended events of "Family College Nights." This spring's offerings feature SOMETHING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY:

Earn a College Degree as an Evening Student
Baby-Sitting Services
Chance to Study While Traveling on Free Buses
Special Courses for Children
Recreation Activities for Every Age
Credit Courses Tailored to Individual Needs
Free Courses for Senior Citizens
Special Programs on Current Issues[9]

With a return to the traditional college administrative structure and re-establishment of institutional equilibrium, an increasingly larger percentage of the total college resources are made available for community services. Faculty, realizing that job security rests with non-traditional students and learning to enjoy the challenge they offer, are most supportive. Without the dual authority structure, conflict has been virtually eliminated. The change emphasis was obviously beneficial to the life of the college.

Is there a way short of an abortive change agent that this could have been accomplished? "Conflict," according to Schilet, "is not the

cause of social system stresses but rather a symptom which can help to focus on corrective solutions."[10] The positive value of this conflict was to bring the issue of the non-traditional student to the surface and force the institution to deal with it.

Had the structure been responsive to the community non-traditional students needs from the beginning, the alternative administrative structure would not have been needed.

The planning of change is one of the managerial responsibilities in a society of changing priorities. This is especially needed in an institution as dependent upon societal support as higher education. A good idea is not enough for successful implementation of change -- management of the implementation of that idea requires an understanding of the restraining and driving forces, or the action and counter-action, and development of positive strategy to deal with those realities.

In summary, a good idea is not enough. It requires strong institutional backing which can be measured in terms of allocation of resources, both budget and people. As a change agency, you can move an institution to a new emphasis even without this backing so long as you do not plan to retire at that institution. Change is not an undertaking for the faint-hearted.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Arthur Cohen, College Responses to Community Demands (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1975), p. 81.

[2]George B. Vaughan and Martha A. Turnage, "Community Services in the Community College: Revitalizing a Function," position paper, (september, 1973).

[3]Faculty and Staff Handbook, Mountain Empire Community College, Big Stone Gap, Virginia, (October 16, 1973).

[4]William D. Guth, "Behavior and Decision-Making in Complex Organizations," The Management of Change, ed. by Michael Brick and Andrew A. Bushko, (New York: Columbia University), p. 17.

[5]Kenneth D. Benne,and Max Birnbaum, "Principles of Change," The Planning of Change, ed. by Benne, Benne, Chin, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1969).

[6]Cohen, p. 111.

[7]Ronald Corwin, Militant Professionalism: A Study of Organizational Conflict in Schools, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).

[8]Guth, p. 8.

[9]"Family College Nights," Mountain Empire Community College, catalog, (Spring, 1975).

[10]Henrietta Schilit, "Coping with Community Crisis," Journal of Community Development Society (Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall, 1974).

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